

**TESTIMONY TO THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION**  
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**STATE OF MISSOURI**  
**April 3, 2006**

Good morning, my name is Mike Wells. I am Deputy Director for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and Chief of Water Resources for the State of Missouri. As Chief of Water Resources for the State, I represent Governor Matt Blunt on interstate water issues. Thank you for providing this opportunity to present testimony.

Federal law mandates the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to operate the Missouri River mainstem reservoir system for the primary purposes of flood control and downstream navigation. During the navigation season, the Corps is to release adequate water from Gavins Point Dam to meet downstream navigation flow targets. In 2006, in accordance with the revised Master Manual, minimum service navigation flows are to be provided to support an 8-foot deep navigation channel. The navigation season at Kansas City opened on March 28. The Corps failed to meet the minimum service navigation target flows at Kansas City of 35,000 cubic feet per second (CFS) for the first four days of the navigation season this year.

Insufficient releases from Gavins Point and inadequate downstream tributary inflow are producing a dangerous situation similar to 2003. Three years ago this week, the Corps was also not meeting flow targets at Kansas City. Due to the low river, a barge became grounded near Jefferson City and several other barges were hitting bottom throughout the lower Missouri River. These problems prevented more than 20 barges loaded with fertilizer from moving up river from St. Louis for over two weeks. As you are aware, early April is a critical time of the year for farmers and to delay the delivery of fertilizer by two weeks is unacceptable.

It is extremely important for river commerce to have reliable flows. After the fiasco in 2003, many barge operators and shippers have left the Missouri River and are reluctant to return. Therefore, it is imperative that the Corps of Engineers provides a reliable river channel when navigation season opens.

The second issue I want to bring before the Commission today is the Red River Water Supply Project in central North Dakota. This project would transfer water from the Missouri River basin and into the Red River basin. The Red River flows north into Canada and that water will be lost to the Missouri River basin, further depleting water available for downstream uses.

Transferring water from the Missouri River basin further reduces the amount of water available for downstream uses on both the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. The State of Missouri has had a long-standing position opposing any transfers of water from the Missouri River basin and we are opposing this project along with the State of Minnesota and the Canadian Government.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has filed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on this project. Comments are due to the Bureau by April 14, 2006. In the Draft EIS the Bureau failed to analyze the impacts to Mississippi River navigation. This omission was made even though the Corps' analysis during the Missouri River Master Manual review shows that increased depletions to the Missouri River basin would result in substantial negative economic impacts to Mississippi River navigation. The Draft EIS not only neglected to study the most significant downstream negative impact, the Mississippi River; it appears that the Bureau purposefully erred on the low side of current depletion estimates for the Missouri River basin. It is critical for those outside the Missouri River basin to weigh in on these very important issues. Today, I am requesting the Mississippi River Commission to go on record in opposition to the Red River Water Supply Project and join us in fighting this ill-conceived project.

The State of Missouri continues to emphasize that the Missouri and Mississippi rivers need to be operated as one system. Again, we see another example of how water management decisions on the Missouri River can directly effect the Mississippi River.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about these important issues. Mississippi River interests need to be aware of these concerns because they are directly affected. The State of Missouri looks forward to continuing to work with the Corps and the Commission in managing these great rivers as one system. Again, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. At this time, I would be glad to answer any questions.

